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SUBJECT: Recent Nigerian Political Developments.

The following are brief comments on selected political developments during the past three or four weeks. It is regretted that this Consulate General has now been for six weeks with but a single officer of its complement of three, due to delays in assignment and arrivals of replacements, and for several months before had only two out of its complement of three officers. The pressures on the single officer at the post have been such that only the outlines of selected major developments can be covered. This is particularly unfortunate in view of the fast moving political picture here, and the re-convening of the Conference on Revision of the Nigerian Constitution here the day after tomorrow - January 19.

Action Group Third Annual Congress.

The Action Group's Third Annual Congress was held at Warri between December 16 and 20. The principal event appears to have been Obafemi AWOLOWO's (The Action Group leader) speech, a clipping of which from the Action Group-slanted Lagos Daily Times of December 17 is enclosed. The issue of the status of Lagos was belabored considerably less than might have been expected. Also, but in singularly insulting fashion, Awolowo called off the non-fraternization ban which even such Action Group Ministers as Chief Arthur PREST had come to honor more in the breach than in practise. The speech probably reached a new low in innuendo and vituperation directed toward a popular Governor and toward the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Conservative Government in Britain. So far as the reporting officer can determine from Action Group friends in Lagos, Awolowo's diatribes cost him further support from the "natural" rulers, i.e., the Obas, of the West, as well as the rank and file of innately courteous and friendly Africans.

Interestingly enough, Awolowo's intemperate utterances, including his "demands" of Lytellton last October and the latter's firm reply (see enclosed clippings from the Daily Times of October 24 and November 12) have aroused much more attention in the United Kingdom

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United Kingdom than they have in Nigeria. As indicated in a previous despatch (No. 88 of December 27, 1953), Awolowo and his immediate supporters seem to have been so carried away by the ready ear lent to them by certain Labour Party elements and press in Britain that they have lost touch with the feelings of the more responsible elements of their own people in Nigeria.

The Action Group Congress made some changes in the top echelon of the party's officers, apparently in an effort to bring some new and younger blood into executive positions. Awolowo was, of course, re-elected Federal President, but Ayo ROSIJI, a comparative unknown, was elected Federal General Secretary in place of S. O. SHONIBARE, Acting General Secretary, and Fani KAYODE was elected Assistant General Secretary to replace Anthony ENAHORO. Dr. Akanni DOHERTY, of Lagos, was elected Federal Vice-President for the Western Region.

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The Lagos Issue, and the Reconvening of the Conference on the Constitution.

The question of the status of Lagos has received far less attention in the local press, even on the eve of the reconvening of the Constitutional Conference (see Congen's Despatch No. 88 of December 27, 1953), than it did in the three or four months following the London conference last August. The basic fact is that the great part of the population of Lagos (excluding the politicians) are quite disinterested. Nevertheless, it is still the issue

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the issue which may break the Conference.

Given African emotionalism, and the psychological complex which forbids a local politician from backing down on an issue for fear of losing face and ceasing to be a "big man", almost anything can happen. While highly placed British officers are more optimistic than they were a few weeks ago, none profess to be able to forecast the outcome of the Conference in view of the above factors. For example, on the one hand, some have expressed the view to the writer that the reconvened Conference will be little more than a rubber-stamp meeting which, with a minimum of "palaver," will ratify arrangements for the implementation of the decisions agreed on at London last August. On the other hand, another highly placed and keen political officer, feels that unless some face-saving device is worked out on the Lagos issue (which is unlikely so long as the East and North stand firm behind Lyttelton's London decision), Awolowo will try for an amendment to the Constitution to permit the West lawfully to secede from Nigeria, either with or without Lagos. Failing such an amendment, which would mean the fragmentization of Nigeria (and the adoption of which seems inconceivable), the above source feels that Awolowo is stubborn enough and has enough of the Messiah complex to try to lead the West into secession.

However, the fundamental fact is that the great mass of Nigerians are little interested in politics, while their ties to the native rulers, by tradition and religion, are fundamentally closer than they are to the new generation of political leaders. In short, the Obas and the Alafins of the West (who are fundamentally conservative and generally loyal to British rule), and in turn the great mass of people, would certainly be slow to "die on the barricades" for a new-generation politician such as Awolowo, if he were to attempt extreme measures.

It is interesting to note that despite all of the words that have been uttered in political circles in Britain and Nigeria on the Lagos issue, Lyttelton was received with spontaneous warmth and applause today by the people in the streets when he drove from Ikeja Airport to Lagos on his arrival to preside over the re-convened Conference, and there were no attempts at disturbance in this "Western Region" city. The same was true when the Governor returned from the London conference in August.

Elections to the Eastern House of Assembly

In the elections to the Eastern House of Assembly, completed early this month, Azikewe's NCNC came through with a virtual landslide, excepting the Cameroons. The NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) captured 72 seats to the new House,

the NIP

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the NIP (National Independence Party) 9 seats, and the UNP (United National Party) 3 seats. (In the Cameroons, Dr. ENDELEY's KNC (Kamerun National Congress), which has bitterly opposed Azikewe and which demands that the Cameroons be a separate Region divorced from the Eastern Region, made a clean sweep, winning all 13 seats in the Cameroons. The KPP (Kamerun Peoples Party), which is an ally of the NCNC, failed to win a single seat.)

Among the head line surprise losers in the elections to the Eastern House of Assembly were A.C. NWAPA, Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Central Government and Jaja WACHUKU, Secretary of the NIP. On the other hand, Okoi ARIKPO, Central Minister of Mines and Power, who with Nwapa had been expelled from the NCNC at the Jos Convention about fifteen months ago, and had then become one of the founders of the NIP, was re-elected, as was Professor Eyo IFA.

Among the headline winners were, of course, Azikewe, who was elected handily from the Onitsha District, R. A. NJOKU, Regional President of the NCNC in the Eastern Region and President of the politically potent Ibo State Union, and E. O. EYO, who had been "tapped" by Azikewe for the Regional Minister of Works position about a year ago.

Comment: In a politically immature country such as Nigeria, tribalism counts heavily indeed, and Azikewe's Ibo following, in the predominantly Ibo East, obviously stood by him firmly. Under this same immaturity, political emotionalism is also important, and Azikewe unquestionably has very real crowd appeal. As a final point, and particularly in the secondary election system in the East, under which the number of electors to the House is small, a well-financed party war-chest is said to be an almost indispensable factor, and the NCNC was unquestionably best off on this score. On the other hand, tribute must be paid to Azikewe for his grass-roots work - he had been in the East almost continuously for the past five or six months, doing a most thorough job of electioneering. At the present stage of Nigerian political development, in which a "big man" is more important than a party, the election must, of course, be looked upon as much more a personal victory for Azikewe than a party victory.

Comments: So far as the NIP is concerned, there is currently no indication that it intends to take its defeat lying down, or that its leaders intend to succumb to NCNC blandishments to return to the NCNC fold, now that they have taken a political beating as dissidents. The writer of this despatch chatted briefly with Nwapa, who has resigned his Ministerial portfolio following his election defeat, a few evenings ago, and found his attitude to be anything but that of a political has-been.

The Cameroons

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The Cameroons election offered clear evidence, to the extent that Nigerian elections can be considered an indication of popular feeling, that the people of that area emphatically have no desire to be dominated by Azikewe's NCNC and the Ibos of the Eastern Region.

Meeting of the Eastern House of Assembly, Elections to the Central Legislature, and Appointments of Ministers.

The newly elected Eastern House of Assembly met this past week for a brief session to elect members to the Central House of Representatives and to approve appointments to the Central and Regional Councils of Ministers. Sir Clement PLEASS, the Lieutenant Governor of the Eastern Region, who is a thoroughly forthright and staunch type of person, made a brief opening address. His keynote was in one pungent sentence - "I beseech you to act like statesmen of the next generation, and not like politicians of the next election" - a timely injunction in the light of the political irresponsibilities and Azikewe's machinations in connection with the last House of Assembly, which Sir Clement was forced to dissolve less than a year ago when it failed to consider the annual budget bill.

Twenty-nine members, all NCNC, were elected from the membership of the Regional House to the central House of Representatives, of which the best known figures were Azikewe and Njoku. The nominations of M. T. MBU, K. O. MBADIWE, and R. A. Njoku to the central Council of Ministers were approved. To the Regional Executive Council, the following were nominated and approved - Nnambdi Azikewe; Mbonu OJIKE; I. U. AKPABIO; M. I. OKPARA; Walter ONUBOGU; M. C. AWGU; I. U. IMEH; and E. P. OKOYA. The portfolios have not yet been distributed. It is of interest to note that, in addition to Azikewe, three of the above were educated in the United States - Mbadiwe, Ojike, and Akpabio.

The solid block of representatives from the Cameroons (13 KNC), whose distrust of Azikewe and fear of becoming the tail wagged by the NCNC and Ibo East is well-known, boycotted the meeting of the newly elected Eastern House. Therefore, four vacancies in the Central House, [redacted] and a seat on the Regional Executive Council, which under the present Constitution must be filled from the Cameroons, were left vacant. Also, one member from Calabar failed to give notice of his candidacy for the Central House of Representatives, so to date only 29 of the 34 Eastern Region seats in the Central House have been filled.

New Emir of Kano

The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Abdullahi BAYERO, the head of one of the three great Emirates of the Northern Region (Katsina, Kano and Bornu),

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and Bornu), and its commercial capital, died on December 24. The four traditional electors chose his eldest son, Alhaji Mohammadu SANUSI, Ciroman Kano, as the new Emir. Mohammadu Sanusi was born in 1950, was educated privately, and first held office as district head of Bichi District in 1926, became a member of the Emir's Council in 1939, and in 1947 assumed charge of District Administration. He is said to have made a good record in the latter position, which covers 24 districts. The new Emir announced that he would make a number of reforms, with respect particularly to the local judiciary, land laws, and the organization of his personal household.

Comment: The impression which the reporting officer has gained from conversations with Administrative officers who have served in the North is that the new Emir will be considerably more progressive than his father, but still not as progressive a person as they would like to see heading this great principality, with a population of well over 3,000,000 people, and which still in many respects can be characterized as semi-feudal state.

From the human interest standpoint, the account of the installation of the new Emir, from the Lagos Daily Times of January 6, a clipping of which is enclosed (Enclosure No. 4), is well worth reading.

Governor's New Year's Broadcast

In his traditional New Year's broadcast to the country, the Governor (Sir John MACPHERSON) first touched briefly on international and Commonwealth affairs. With respect to international affairs, he said that the cold war continues and behind it the fear of real war, but that tension was less than a year ago and the threat of war has receded slightly, and pointed out how much it would mean to the world and their own people if the leaders of Russia and China were to show that they truly wanted peace and were going to stop interfering in the affairs of other countries. His brief remarks on Commonwealth affairs were largely addressed to the unity of the Commonwealth, as evidenced by the Christmas messages to the Queen.

With regard to Nigerian affairs, the Governor expressed the view that since the London Conference, the political atmosphere of the country had become clearer and healthier than it had been earlier in the year, when (as a result of the crisis at the end of March) the country had suffered a serious constitutional set-back. He felt that there had been a real quickening of political consciousness among the masses of the people, and they were weighing their governments of all levels and their leaders as never before.

The Governor

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The Governor made an eloquent plea for the end of squabbles and agitation by political leaders, outlining the basic things the ordinary people want, and which great progress could be obtained if energies were not dissipated in squabbles between political leaders - the maintenance of law and order; services without "dashes"; improved education and health facilities; good prices for produce; water supply and better communications; jobs with a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. He asked that the political leaders ponder these things before the re-convening of the Constitutional Conference on January 18, and that the people urge their leaders to support the course he had suggested.

Comment: It may be noted that the Governor and Lady Macpherson made an 18-day tour of the Eastern Region in November, visiting numerous small towns and rural centers, and were everywhere exceedingly well received. The things that the vast majority of the people want, and which the Governor has seen and knows at first-hand, were well outlined in his New Year's speech, as was his own sincere desire for an end to political bickering, and getting on with the job of economic, social and political progress. How far the political leaders can rise to the challenge is quite another question.

The text of the Governor's address will be found in the enclosed clipping from the West African Pilot of January 2, 1954.

Akintola to be Deputy Leader of Action Group

The press of January 16 reports that S. L. Akintola, Central Minister of Health, has been appointed by the Action Group to succeed the late Chief Bode Thomas as Deputy Leader of the party.

Comment: On the basis of Akintola's performance at the time of the crisis in the Central House of Representatives last Spring, he will not be a moderating influence or otherwise an improvement over Thomas.

Erwin P. Keeler.

Erwin P. Keeler
American Consul General

Enclosures:
1. Daily Times clipping of Dec. 17, 1953.
2. Daily Times clipping of Oct. 24, 1953.
3. Daily Times clipping of Nov. 12, 1953.
4. Daily Times clipping of Jan. 6, 1954.
5. West African Pilot clipping of Ja . 2, 1954.

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service. This naturally had a very great effect on the participation. After the strike those employees not wanted back were dropped from the rolls.

During the year Communist leadership within the unions suffered a definite setback. The red Labor Champion went out of business in late June owing to the absence of funds. The failure of the December strike and irresponsible activities of Mr. Eze and his associates lost them a great deal of support within the labor movement. Days lost by strikes fell from 400,000 in 1949 to 200,000 in 1950.

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